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FOR NEA/ARP:AMACDONALD

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TAGS: PGOV PTER PREL YM

SUBJECT: MPS SCOLD SECURITY FORCES ON TERRORIST ATTACKS

Classified By: CDA Angie Bryan for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (U) On March 23, Yemen's Parliament held a contentious five-hour closed session to discuss recent terrorist attacks and the overall lack of security in the country. Ranking ROYG officials in attendance included Deputy Prime Minister for Defense and Security Affairs Rashad al-Alimi and the Ministers of Culture, Tourism and Religious Guidance. Conspicuous by his absence was Interior Minister Mutaher al-Masri ( reportedly in Beirut for two weeks ) whose ministry was represented by a deputy minister.

¶2. (C) Opposition Islah MP Shawki al-Qadi told POLOFF on March 24 that parliamentarians from all parties, including the ruling General People's Congress (GPC), criticized Yemen's security apparatus. According to Qadi, members accused the security services of complicity in recent al-Qaeda attacks. These accusations appear to have sprung from the March 18 attack on South Korean officials and family members who had come to Yemen after the March 15 attack in Hadramout that killed four South Korean tourists. Parliamentarians said that the only way the attackers could have targeted the group was if they had received inside information from the security services. Unconfirmed press reports on March 25 alleged that Alimi said during the session that the ROYG had discovered evidence of al-Qaeda's penetration into the security forces. (Comment: Post finds it unlikely that Alimi would have made such a statement, and has not yet been able to verify it. A Ministry of Defense newspaper issued a statement on the afternoon of March 25 denying the reports. End Comment.) Previously, the ROYG strongly denied this possibility, saying that the targeting of the investigators was simply a grisly coincidence and the attacker was laying in wait for any motorcade to pass.

¶3. (C) GPC MP Shawki Shamsan told POL/E Chief on March 24 that, during the grueling March 23 session, the Parliament had appointed a special committee to look into recent attacks. He said the committee's report was expected on March 25 or 28. Qadi told POLOFF that the recent attacks were just the straw that broke the camel's back, releasing pent-up frustration among parliamentarians with Yemen's deteriorating security situation. He said the fact that the recent attacks targeted South Koreans rather than Westerners contributed to the parliamentarians' anger. (Comment: Qadi's remarks and press reports seem to indicate that, while targeting Americans is seen as routine and not worthy of a high level of public condemnation, the attacks on South Koreans, whose country is seen less as a political and more as an economic power in Yemen, are considered more deserving of ire. End Comment.)

BRYAN